

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, May 24, 2007

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May 24, 9:14 AM EDT

Stepmother and brother charged in 22-year-old death of boy

FLINT, Mich. (AP) -- A woman and her brother have been charged in the death of the woman's stepson, whose body was found floating in the Flint River 22 years ago, the state attorney general's office said Thursday.

Rosalind Brown and Montel Pettiford are accused of poisoning, then drowning 11-year-old Christopher Brown in 1985.

The sixth-grader's body was found in the river nearly three weeks after he was reported missing from his father's and stepmother's home in Genesee Township.

His death initially was ruled an accidental drowning, but his mother, Brenda Simpson, was suspicious, because her son couldn't swim and was fully dressed and wearing shoes when his body was pulled from the water, The Flint Journal reported.

The case was reopened three years ago, and the boy's body was exhumed for tests which showed a substance in his system that would have been strong enough to incapacitate him, Attorney General Mike Cox said in a statement.

Christopher's death was ruled a homicide in 2005.

At the time of his death, the boy was spending Easter break at his father's home.

Rosalind Brown, 50, of Wyoming and Pettiford, 43, of Flint are charged with first-degree murder. If convicted as charged, they face life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Man arraigned for allegedly courting sex with 7-year-old

May 23, 2007

BY BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 27-year-old Brownstown Township man was arraigned Wednesday on charges that he used the Internet to try and arrange a sexual encounter with a Taylor woman's 7-year-old daughter.

On Monday, deputies from the Wayne County Sheriff's Internet Unit raided the home of Nicholas Alley, seizing his computer and a Taser weapon, which can produce an electric shock in victims.

Alley later surrendered without incident.

Officers uncovered emails between Alley and the Taylor woman, whose name is being withheld to protect the child's identity, indicating that he wanted to abuse the young girl.

Evans said an undercover deputy, posting as a 14-year-old girl, has been chatting with Alley on the Internet for about 18 months.

"When the Taylor woman came up, our focus, obviously, went to her," Evans said.

Sheriff's deputies arrested the Taylor woman on March at a Romulus hotel, where officials say the woman brought her daughter to be abused. The prospective abuser, however, was an undercover police officer.

The woman is being held on a \$1 million bond.

Alley faces a slew of charges including possession of child sexually abusive activity and illegal use of the Internet, both 20-year felonies. His bond was set during an arraignment at 31st District Court in Hamtramck at 150,000, 10 percent, meaning he can be freed if he posts \$15,000.

Alley may also face a charge for illegally possessing the Taser weapon.

Evans said he's not sure why Alley had the stun-gun type weapon.

"My mind automatically goes to the issue of the molestation and the abuse of the children and I would hope to God that wasn't a part of any gimmick with the children," he said.

Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-223-4296 or bcschmitt@freepress.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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May 23, 2007

Brownstown man arraigned in Web sex case involving girl, 7

Norman Sinclair / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Nicholas Alley, 27, of Brownstown Township was arraigned today in 31st District Court in Hamtramck on two counts of child sexual abuse that Wayne County Sheriff's deputies said involved negotiations on the Internet with a Taylor woman to have sexual contact with her daughter.

The 33-year-old woman, who also faces child sexual abuse charges, allegedly offered her 7-year-old daughter to the man for sexual activity, investigators said.

Alley also faces six other counts of using the Internet to accost and solicit a minor and attempted dissemination of obscene material to a minor child.

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans said the investigation of Alley began 18 months ago and deputies uncovered e-mail conversations between Alley and the Taylor woman indicating their mutual intent to allow Alley to sexually abuse her children. Evans said investigators are trying to determine if any meeting occurred with the woman and her children.

"Our investigator chatted on and off for about a year with Mr. Alley before he began sending graphic images," Evans said. "Our investigation into his Internet activity revealed he had been receiving child pornography from the Taylor woman who we learned was also exchanging images with a man from Saginaw."

The Detroit News is not using the woman's name to protect the identity of the children. She has five children and was arrested in March. She remains jailed under bond of \$1 million. She faces seven counts of criminal sexual conduct involving offering her daughter for sex and pornographic photos through the Internet. She allegedly offered her daughters to a man in Saginaw and those allegations remain under investigation, Evans said.

Evans said Alley chatted graphically with a deputy from the Sheriff's Internet Crime Unit who was posing as a 14-year-old girl. On Monday deputies used a search warrant to enter Alley's home and confiscated his computer. They also seized a taser, an illegal weapon for anyone to possess other than police officers. Alley could face charges for that weapon and any child pornography material found on his computer, Evans said.

District Court Judge Paul S. Paruk ordered Alley held on a 10 percent \$150,000 bond and he set a preliminary examination date for May 31.

You can reach Norman Sinclair at (313) 222-2034 or nsinclair@detnews.com.

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Lowell officer charged in sex assault against boy

Thursday, May 24, 2007

By John Tunison

The Grand Rapids Press

ALLEGAN -- A Lowell police officer remains on administrative leave while facing criminal charges for an alleged 2002 sexual assault against a 13-year-old boy.

Brandon Clare Robinson, a full-time officer with Lowell for two years, is accused of molesting the teen in a trailer he had at Sandy Pines resort near Hopkins.

Robinson, 30, of Wyoming, worked as a part-time deputy with the Allegan County Sheriff's Department from April 2000 to May 2002, then became a part-time officer with Lowell in December 2002 before joining the force full-time, according to officials with the two agencies.

"He has been an outstanding officer," Lowell Police Chief James Valentine said. "It kind of caught us all by surprise when this came up."

Robinson earlier this week was ordered to stand trial in Allegan County Circuit Court on two counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct against a victim 13 to 15 years old.

His attorney, Steven Freeman of Lansing, said Robinson maintains his innocence.

"He denies any sexual involvement with this teen at all, regardless of when," he said. "And there have been no other complaints by anybody, ever."

"It's curious to me why he (the alleged victim) wants to come forward five years after something happens. That strikes me as odd," Freeman said.

Robinson voluntarily came to Valentine in late February to divulge he was being investigated by the state police at the Wayland post. He was placed on paid administrative leave at the time.

Later, when charges were filed, he was placed on unpaid leave pending the outcome of the case.

The alleged victim, now 18, testified at a Tuesday court hearing that Robinson was a family friend who often drove him from Wyoming to Sandy Pines in 2002. The teen often would spend the night at the trailer.

"It started out doing truth-or-dare, then it turned into a sexual thing," he testified.

He said the molestations happened several times over at least a year, but he did not tell anyone because Robinson told him not to and called it a "secret we have to take to our graves."

"It didn't seem right, but he told me it was normal and everyone did it," the teen testified. "He had been a friend of the family for years. I trusted him."

"I was 13. I didn't know right from wrong, really," he said.

The teen said he kept the secret until last November, when he told his sister after a weekend hunting trip involving several people, including Robinson. The teen and

Robinson did not get along during the trip, testimony showed.

Robinson is a patrol officer for Lowell Police, working an overlay shift between the normal day and night shifts. He is married, and his wife is pregnant, his attorney said.

Valentine said he will conduct an administrative investigation on Robinson when the court case is finished, so as to avoid any perception of conflict with the state police probe.

"Brandon has just been a very dedicated officer," he said.

Freeman said the case essentially puts Robinson's word against the teen's word.

"To the best of my knowledge, there are no witnesses," he said.

Robinson did not return a call seeking comment, and the state police detective who investigated the case was unavailable for comment.

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Riverview To Stop Accepting New Patients

POSTED: 6:07 am EDT May 24, 2007

UPDATED: 8:14 am EDT May 24, 2007

Riverview Hospital, a major emergency health care provider to the poor, will stop all inpatient admissions by next Friday as St. John Health works to close the hospital by June 30, Local 4 reported.

The Karmanos Cancer Institute announced in April it plans to buy the hospital and convert it for use as a clinical center.

Riverview is one of the last hospitals on Detroit's east side.

Administrators at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital and the Detroit Medical Center have expressed concern that Riverview's closing will overwhelm their emergency and psychiatry departments.

But Eliot Joseph, president and chief executive of St. John Health, told the Detroit Free Press that his hospitals, as well as Ford and DMC, have adequate capacity to accept Riverview patients.

The DMC has filed a lawsuit against Karmanos, its longtime clinical partner, to stop the move, alleging that Karmanos would be breaking numerous contractual obligations.

Karmanos said it planned to begin a \$20 million renovation of Riverview hospital and would open the site in fall 2008, employing about 1,000 people. Karmanos is headquartered near the DMC, from which it split in 2005.

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It's all about the love

Foster care, Copper Country style



CAPTION: Layla Aslani/Daily Mining Gazette

Amanda, David and Desiree jump on the family trampoline.

By LAYLA ASLANI , DMG Writer

LAKE LINDEN — When Lynnett Cruickshank decided to become a foster parent, it was a decision she made with the help of her three kids.

"It's not just my house, it's their house, too, so we sat down and discussed it," she said. "(We talked) about kids needing a home and they said it was okay so off we went with it."

That was five years ago.

Today, a total of seven children ranging in age from 12 to 18 years old call the Cruickshank residence home. Cruickshank has adopted two foster children and currently has two others living with her.

Cruickshank's household is one of the 20 local foster homes that will be honored at a banquet tonight put on by the Department of Human Services. The dinner is part of foster care appreciation month and will include gifts from the local community for the parents and live music, said Mark Lambert, executive director of the Good Will Farm.

The local foster homes provide a safe place for children to live, Lambert said. Most children are placed in foster care due to parental abuse or neglect, according to the National Foster Care Month Web site. Lambert said the length of time a child lives in foster care depends on whether or not they can be reunited with their families.

"Some kids spend a short amount of time, unfortunately some kids spend a lot of time," he said. "Some kids actually spend most of their youth in foster care or they're adopted."

The Good Will Farm holds a monthly workshop to provide support for foster parents. Cruickshank attends the workshops and said the topics range from children and the Internet to fetal alcohol syndrome.

At the workshops, Cruickshank met Pam Thames, another foster parent who estimates she has seen about 30 kids pass through her home over the past seven years. Thames said she and her

husband became foster parents after their four kids grew up and left home.

"Our kids are downstate and we like kids and we like helping kids," Thames said. "We discussed it for about two years, which is the norm, then we decided. It's not something you jump into."

Soon after meeting, Cruickshank and Thames realized they lived in the same Lake Linden neighborhood. They now communicate weekly and offer advice to each other.

Despite the support, Cruickshank, said the job is not easy.

"No kids come with instructions, you wing it everyday," Cruickshank said, adding that some kids come with a lot of emotional baggage. "So you just hope you do the right thing and you raise them the right way and give them the values they need to move on with life."

In addition, upset parents and relatives of the foster children occasionally cause problems.

"We've had threats and tampering with vehicles," Cruickshank said. "You get to know the police pretty well."

Overall, though, Cruickshank said the good outweighs the bad. She said one of the greatest rewards is seeing a child's face light up when she goes to their school to watch something they are in. Cruickshank said foster parenting is something she sees herself doing for a long time to come.

"(I'll do it) as long as they'll let me," she said.

Bay City Times Letters

May 24, 2007

Foster children

Voice: Karen A. Tighe, Bay County probate judge, Bay City

May has been designated as National Foster Care Month. After 12 years as probate judge, this year I would like to comment on the unfortunate plight of many youths who "age out" of the foster care system. According to the Department of Human Services, last year 536 foster teens "aged-out" of Michigan's child welfare system without being adopted. This figure is up from 462 children in 2005.

How many intact families just "let go" of their children when they turn 18? In fact, at that age young people still need firm guidance.

Yet, statistics compiled by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative show that for young people leaving foster care, by the time they reach age 22, 46 percent lack a high school diploma, 25 percent have experienced homelessness, 42 percent have become parents and a third of the youth have suffered from mental illness or substance abuse - more than twice the national average.

Foster children who are not adopted have no legal family connections. By age 18 they are effectively orphaned by the system designed to protect them. As a caring community, we need to do more to help these youngsters find their way. The outcome areas which need attention include education, employment, housing, health, and especially, community engagement. The Department of Human Services is trying to address the fallacy of "independence at 18" by keeping programs alive for emancipated former foster children. One of the most helpful ways for individuals to contribute to child welfare is to become a mentor. There is a critical need for mentors for young people between the ages of 14 and 24. Sometimes, to turn a life around, all it takes is for one person to reach out and connect with another. More information about mentoring foster youth can be obtained from Doug Lewis at the Department of Human Services, 895-2123 or Lewis5@michigan.gov.

May 24, 2007**EDITORIAL**

Giving Juvenile Offenders a Chance

The Connecticut State Senate set a welcome national example this week when it passed a bill that would move 16- and 17-year-old offenders out of the adult courts and back into the juvenile justice system where they belong. Connecticut's House should move quickly to approve the legislation, which would rescue thousands of young people from being trapped in an adult system that, far from reforming them, too often turns them into hardened criminals.

Forty states have laws that either allow or require young offenders to do some time in adult jails. Thankfully, many are beginning to revisit those policies. But Connecticut is one of only three states — along with New York and North Carolina — that automatically try 16-year-olds as adults. Embarrassed by that fact, last year state lawmakers in Connecticut established a commission that was instructed to bring the state's correction laws into line with humane and sensible practices.

This bill is the welcome result. It is also backed by a substantial body of research showing that children who are processed through adult courts and who do time in adult jails fare worse in life — and commit much more violent crime — than children handled in juvenile courts. Once saddled with adult convictions, these young offenders are typically barred from all kinds of jobs and confined to the very margins of society.

The new legislation, which calls for juveniles to be closely supervised and provided with extensive mental health, educational and re-entry services, will cost Connecticut more money initially. But the law would more than pay for itself by cutting down on recidivism and by giving troubled young people a real chance to become productive, law-abiding adults.

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Published May 24, 2007

State warns of layoffs

Granholm sends official notices to employees' bargaining units

Chris Andrews and Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

It's no longer a question of whether she'll be able to go out to dinner and a movie.

Media files:

- [Copy of letter to state unions about layoffs - pdf](#)

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For Susan Bailey of East Lansing, the possibility of state layoffs has left her wondering how she'll pay her bills.

"I'm not married, I don't have another income," said Bailey, who works for the state Treasury Department.

Bailey is one of thousands of state government workers who aren't sure today whether they can count on full paychecks this summer.

The Granholm administration on Tuesday sent official notices to unions representing state workers warning them of possible layoffs on or after June 22.

The Civil Service Commission passed rules for laying off nonunionized workers in April.

There's talk of a partial government shutdown for four days after July 4. By splitting the days off over two weeks, the state could avoid unemployment claims.

There are 14,300 state employees working in the tri-county area.

Most union contracts provide for temporary layoffs of up to 19 days, or almost four weeks' pay.

There also are provisions for indefinite layoffs.

The notices to unions come as Gov. Jennifer Granholm and legislative leaders continue to negotiate to resolve the state's \$800 million budget crisis. Gran-holm wants to have a plan in place by June 1.

Granholm spokeswoman Liz Boyd down played the importance of the notices.

"This doesn't mean that layoffs are going to happen," Boyd said. "We are not prepared to say if they're going to happen or how many layoffs there will be. We don't know."

But she said the layoffs could come if there is no budget solution, or as part of one. The Michigan

Court of Appeals already has announced plans to close for eight days during the summer to cut costs.

State Budget Director Robert Emerson has been reviewing plans submitted by departments if a shutdown occurs.

He has said that public safety efforts will continue.

However, both the Michigan State Police Troopers Association and the Michigan Corrections Organization were among unions getting the layoff notices.

Corrections union Vice President Mel Grieshaber said the union already is down several hundred officers from 2001, even though the state is locking up more prisoners.

He said the state has the authority to reduce corrections officers' hours but added "we are already working at more dangerous (staffing) levels."

Many state workers are already preparing for days off without pay.

"I don't think they'll agree on the budget until they have furlough days," said Sue Nelson, a Treasury Department secretary who is represented by the United Auto Workers union.

Nelson, a Lansing resident, said she has been cutting back on her household budget as she braces for possible time off without pay.

She used to go to Cadillac every two weeks to relax and unwind.

"You can't go on vacation, you can't do the same things," she said.

Right now, that's the extent of her budget cuts, Nelson said, but if both she and her husband - who also is a state employee - get laid off, then who knows?

Bailey and Nelson said they think legislators should heed the old adage that "done is better than perfect."

Anything, they say, to avoid layoffs.

"They should feel so bad and not be able to sleep at night," Bailey said.

"My God, show us some leadership."

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or ceandrews@lsj.com. Contact Derek Wallbank at 267-1301 or dwallbank@lsj.com.

ClickOnDetroit.com

DHS To Close 3 Offices

POSTED: 9:30 am EDT May 24, 2007

UPDATED: 9:55 am EDT May 24, 2007

DETROIT -- Michigan Department of Human Services director Marianne Udow today announced that DHS will close three Wayne County offices in May and June in hopes of saving money.

The DHS office in the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center will close May 31. The center itself will not close.

The Tireman District office will close May 25 and the Hamtramck District office will close June 29.

Leases on the two buildings are expiring, and the consolidations resulting from the lease expirations will ultimately result in savings for the state.

"We will do everything possible to minimize the disruption for our clients, staff and Wayne County partners," Udow said. "In most cases, clients will continue to have the same caseworker, and there will be no staff reductions as a result of this action."

Clients served by the Tireman and Hamtramck offices can continue to use the same phone numbers to contact their caseworkers until the transition is complete. They will also receive letters telling them where their cases are assigned and providing them with contact information for their DHS specialists. The DHS office in the Dexter Elmhurst center provides no direct client services.

Public assistance cases served through the Tireman and Hamtramck offices will be reassigned to other Wayne County districts. Cases from Tireman will be reassigned to the Wayne County Grand River-Warren, Schoolcraft and Lafayette district offices. Cases from Hamtramck will be reassigned to the Medbury, Gratiot-7 Mile and McNichols district offices.

None of the offices slated to close provides children's protective services, adoption, foster care or related adult services.

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

**Contact: Renee Fluker (313) 456-1236 in Wayne County
Maureen Sorbet or Karen Stock (517) 373-7394 in Lansing**

DHS to close three Wayne County district offices: Client services and staff will be relocated to other Wayne DHS offices

May 24, 2007

DETROIT – Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) director Marianne Udow today announced that DHS will close three Wayne County offices in May and June.

As a cost saving measure, the DHS office in the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center will close May 31. The center itself will not close; other building tenants will continue to operate at that location.

The Tireman District office will close May 25 and the Hamtramck District office will close June 29. Leases on the two buildings are expiring, and the consolidations resulting from the lease expirations will ultimately result in savings for the state.

"We will do everything possible to minimize the disruption for our clients, staff and Wayne County partners," Udow said. "In most cases, clients will continue to have the same caseworker, and there will be no staff reductions as a result of this action."

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For more information on the Department of Human Services go to www.michigan.gov/dhs



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR



The Michigan
Heart Gallery

News Release

Contact: Jan Berry (517) 373-7394 or Regina Funkhouser, MI Heart Gallery Coordinator (800) 589-6273

2007 Michigan Heart Gallery on Display in Detroit

Public to view professional portraits of Michigan foster children who are waiting for adoption

May 24, 2007

DETROIT – There are more than 4,000 children in Michigan waiting to be adopted. Forty-six of these children are featured in a heart-warming photographic exhibit called the Michigan Heart Gallery, now on display in two Detroit locations.

The Michigan Heart Gallery is a collaborative effort between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network, and the Michigan Department of Human Services. This exhibit seeks to bring our community closer to the faces and voices of children waiting for permanent homes. The Michigan Heart Gallery features professional photos of some of Michigan's waiting children, who come from various regions of the state. Recruitment activities such as the Heart Gallery remind people that there are many children in Michigan who are waiting to be adopted.

Through June 5, the main Heart Gallery is on display at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and a smaller version of this exhibit may be viewed at the Detroit Public Library located on 5201 Woodward Avenue.

The photographs in the Heart Gallery were taken by dozens of professional photographers who donated their time, talent and resources to take portraits that help capture the spirit of children in the foster care system. The Heart Gallery allows these children to be seen in an artistic, poignant and tasteful photographic exhibit. These kids were actively involved in the photo shoot experience, some selecting which portrait to feature in the Heart Gallery, and others coming up with their own poses and settings.

These exhibits travel throughout the state to help promote and advance adoption and fostering. For more information about the Michigan Heart Gallery and how you can get involved, please call (800) 589-6273 or visit the Michigan Heart Gallery Web site at www.miheart.org

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